

IN THE  
DAYS OF  
VILLAINYBy  
ERNEST  
MACGOWAN  
COOKSCopyright, 1901,  
By Ernest  
MacGowan  
Cook

"We might kidnap him!"

"Don't be frivolous," she drew her

dark brows and thought intently.

"I don't understand," she complained.

"You want this report for your own

paper, don't you? I chance to have in-

side information that you—that is, the

star—will have it exclusively. Doesn't

that suit you?"

The young man turned his back to

the room full of chattering people and

put his broad shoulders between her

feline young face and prying eyes.

Their conversation was being held

precisely at a crowded afternoon

tea.

"Look here, girl," he said, "it's just

like this: Yesterday I was city man on

the Star, with a good chance of promo-

tion. I felt I had something to offer

the girl I love. Today the Record

might take me if I went to them with

a scoop in my hand—and they're not

making a living for the men they al-

ready have."

"Oh, Tom," cried the girl, with a

note of keen distress in her carefully

suppressed voice, "you've not lost your

position! How was it?"

The young fellow nodded. "It's

Betts," he returned gloomily. "You

know what Betts is. I was all right

with him till Mr. Markham noticed my

work and (as I've been informed by a

man on the inside) told Betts to push

me as fast as possible, for he thought

I'd make a good chief in my depart-

ment. Betts won't keep a man on the

staff who is a possible rival. He called

me into his private room yesterday

morning and gave me an order which

he knew I'd refuse to execute. When I

did so, he worked himself into a rage

and discharged me. Well, I said some

things an assistant can't say to his

chief before the discharge came. Then

I asked to be allowed to leave at once—

and here I am. I've acted the fool. I'm

not fit to be trusted with your future,

dear. I—" His voice broke a little and

sank into silence.

"You've done just as I would have

you do," the girl returned loyally, "and

now if you're off the Star and not on

the Record how would this cotton mill

scoop affect you?"

"It would square me with Betts if I

could beat him on it, and if I could take

it to the Record it would assure me a

place there. But what's the use of

talking? I've tried all I know, and I

can't get a word of the story."

"If I thought it would be just right,"

she murmured, "Tom," looking at him

anxiously, "you're very sure nobody

will lose money by it if the Star gets

left on this?"

"Oh, you mean outsiders? I'm telling

you the truth when I say it won't make

any difference whatever, financially, to

anybody if the Record gets a scoop on

this cotton mill business and publishes

the fact first that Senator Morgan is in

town looking for a site for the build-

ings."

"All right," said the girl, laughing a

little. "You see, he's mother's cousin,

and of course we went to the hotel to

see him when he first came in yester-

day morning. While we were there

your Mr. Betts of the Star came up. He

and Senator Morgan were in school

together and are old friends.

"Mr. Betts is going down to Birming-

ham to attend a land sale, but I heard

the senator promise him that he would

allow his name to be put on the hotel

register nor permit any of the Record

folks to find out that he was here.

"Mr. Betts was to send a reliable man

around from the Star the next day—

why, that's today, Tom. It's this very

evening! And the senator was going

to give him the details of the cotton

mill scheme, with the names of all the

eastern stockholders and, if he decides

upon it, the exact location of the mill."

"Isn't that enough to make angels

weep?" groaned Tom Harding.

"Poor Tom!" said the girl. "You

look positively thin. Have a little more

oyster pate. You'd feel amiable dis-

posed toward anybody who would help

you out on this, wouldn't you?"

"I'd love 'em for life. Well, I reckon

I can tear down to the Record office

and make the longest item I can out of

the fact that I do know Senator Mor-

gan is here and that his plans are com-

ing on all right. They don't even know

that much."

"Dear me," confided the girl to her

fan. "Men are stupid creatures!"

"But women aren't," said Harding

dryly. "I know you've got a scheme

in that pretty little head of yours."

"It's so easy," said the girl, pawing a

little. "I heard Mr. Betts making the

engagement for his man for late

this evening, and the name he used

was that of a gentleman of my ac-

quaintance, a certain Mr. Thomas

Harding. All you have to do is to go

a little early. Then when the senator

has told you all you want to know,

why, you just say something a little

disagreeable, so that when the real

Star man comes Cousin John will be

furious and won't see him. I'm

ashamed of you to lack a bit of inven-

tion like that."

"At Scott?" murmured Harding.

"You are worth any two men on

the staff. Say, you ought to be a news-

man's wife, do you know it?"

"Believe you said something like

that to me before, and I have taken the

matter under advisement. If I find a

paperman that's worth having,

well—"

she laughed softly as she rose.

When Harding's card went up to the

senator, it found that gentleman seated

at a big desk with a pile of papers

before him. "I'm glad that fellow's

come," he said. "I have the stuff

ready for him, and I want to get it off

my hands."

Harding was most affably received.

The full details and complete plans

were furnished him, together with the

architect's sketch of the proposed mill

and a photograph of the senator for

illustrative purposes.

As he rose to go, with his bundle of

documents and well filled notebook in

hand, he said: "By the way, senator,

wasn't your name recently connected

with some sort of a little story—er—

scandal, I suppose straitlaced people

would call it? It would add spice to

'an otherwise bald and uninteresting

narrative' if you'd let me ring that in.

Don't you think so?"

The senator sat at his desk and

looked at his interlocutor aghast.

"Young man," he thundered, "put—

those papers down!"

"Oh, no," said Harding; "the Star

wants these papers," which was cer-

tainly the truth, "and as for the other

business, why, you may be a deacon

from Deaconville for what I know. All

sorts of things go into the papers."

The senator had risen and was com-

ing toward him as he retreated. "You

told Mr. Betts for me," he roared, "that

if he don't fire you I'll save him the

trouble by wringing your neck for you!"

Then Tom Harding had an inspira-

tion. "See here, senator," he said,

"you're mad now. Oh, yes, you are.

I can see it, though you dissemble it so

beautifully. I'll go"—the senator was

coming uncomfortably near just then—

"but I'll be back in about half an hour,

when you've had time to cool down."

What the senator said when the card

of the genuine Star reporter was car-

ried up to him just twenty minutes later

has become legend and story in that

hotel.

The bellboys gathered in a delighted

cordon to hear him swear as he sent

the message that if that idiot ever

came back there again or sent anybody

else from the paper he'd kill him.

The Star people continued to send

men to interview the senator, who ap-

peared to them to be demoniacally pos-

sessed. Failing to get even a glimpse

of him, though they could hear the

sound of his unutterable roarings down

the corridor, they not unnaturally gathered

the impression—indeed the impres-

sion was abroad pretty generally then—

that the senator had been wined and

dined rather too extensively, and as

Betts, who would have saved them that

crowning folly, was absent they hinted

as much in the next morning's issue of

the paper.

It was on this same morning that the

Record brought out a complete illus-

trated history of Senator Morgan's

cotton mill deal and a taking little

biography and interview with the sen-

ator himself.

The cotton mill meant salvation to

the overboomed little southern town,

and the Record's scoop in giving the

first full and authoritative account of

its location did several things. It gave

the Record a standing long coveted and

worked for. It gave Tom Harding a

secure position on the Record staff and

incidentally placed him where he felt

able to marry.

Nobody but Tom Harding and Tom

Harding's wife knows just how the

scoop came about—well, no one but

Senator Morgan, perhaps, for he, being

related, as you remember, to Tom

Harding's wife's mother, sent the bride

for a wedding present a very pretty

diamond star and a note, in which he

made much jocular use of the word,

suggesting, among other things, that

he believed she was certainly getting

a "star" husband.

The Smallpox Germ.

"One reason why the smallpox germ

is so hard to conquer is that he can as-

sume so many different forms," says

C. F. Scott in Ainslie's. "He can

transform himself from Dr. Jekyll into

Mr. Hyde and into two other distinct

characters at will. One can never tell

which metamorphosis he may assume.

As Mr. Hyde, he is known to the med-

ical profession as Hemorrhagic, a

murderous, deadly fellow that covers

his antagonist with wounds that bleed

so copiously the afflicted one rarely

survives more than a few hours, or, at

most, a few days. In one of his other

characters he bears the name of Con-

fident, as which he raises poisonous

welts on the skin of the victim very

thickly, and they have a tendency to

coalesce. In this character he inflicts

wounds more painful, but less fatal.

The Discrete type manifests himself

in fewer papules and is less vigorous

in his assaults. The Varioloid is the

gentlemanly Dr. Jekyll held in check

by vaccination, and although there is

no mistaking his identity he is mild

mannered and well disposed to the

sufferer. A victim may be exposed to the

Hemorrhagic type and yet the disease

which develops in his own system may

be any of the other varieties, and sim-

ilarly through all the combinations.

In which form the disease will make

its appearance can never be predicted

with certainty."

Every Man Has His Master.

No man is completely free. Every

man has his master. The supremest

despot is a thrill, for there is some-

body whom he fears and must court.

If he does not dread the plebs, he

dreads the patricians; if he is not

afraid of the people, he is afraid of

the army with which he crows the people;

if there is danger in neither the rabble

nor the pretorian guard, there is a mis-

taker, a major domo, a foreign nation,

a jester, a satirist, a dynamiter or a

woman who worries and frightens him

and in a measure controls his actions.

Put two human beings together, and

each will acquire mastery in some re-

spect over the other. The human race

is a social body. Men are interdepend-

ent. Absolute freedom and splendid

isolation are alike impossible. Every

one must obey orders or suffer.—San

Francisco Bulletin.

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